

State Representative Matt Pierce

District 61



“The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped.”

Senator Hubert Humphrey, 1976

This quote from the late Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey reflects my own view that state government can play an important role in protecting and assisting children, senior citizens and the disabled. Several bills were recently passed by the General Assembly to fight abuse of children and the elderly and to better assist the disabled.

PROTECTING CHILDREN

HB 1194—Child Fatality Review Team

Establishes the statewide child fatality review team to investigate fatalities involving children. This bill requires the disclosure of information that establishes the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of a child caused by abuse, abandonment or neglect. Specifies that information concerning caseworkers and employees of social service agencies is public information. These provisions are designed to detect patterns of child abuse so they can be prevented in the future and to allow the public to have more information about failures by caseworkers that lead to child abuse.

SB 194—Children in Need of Services

Provides that a child is a “child in need of services” (CHINS) if the child lives in a household with an adult who committed a sex offense against another child in the same home and the child needs care, treatment or rehabilitation the child is unlikely to receive without the intervention of a court. This allows Child Protective Services to intervene on behalf of a child who is likely to also be suffering abuse in the same home as another abused child.

PROTECTING SENIORS

HB 1660—Abuse of an Endangered Adult

The General Assembly voted to override late Governor O'Bannon's veto of last year's House Bill 1660 which now allows earlier investigation into allegations of adult abuse and neglect. It removes the requirement that the State Department of Health must request assistance before the division of disability, aging, and rehabilitative services or adult protective services may investigate a report of an endangered adult residing in a health facility. Makes battery that results in serious bodily injury to an endangered adult a Class B felony. Makes failing to report an abused endangered adult a Class B misdemeanor instead of a Class A infraction, the same as failing to report child abuse.

HB 1178—Volunteer Advocates for Seniors

Permits a court to appoint a volunteer advocate for seniors to represent and protect for a limited period the interests of an incapacitated or protected person who is at least 55 years of age. Requires a volunteer to report to the court and make recommendations regarding the incapacitated or protected person.

ASSISTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SB 363—Council for People with Disabilities

Creates the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities and a board of directors of the council to implement the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Council and Board currently exists by an executive order from the Governor.

Please visit my website, www.in.gov/H61, to learn more about legislation considered by the General Assembly.

Expanding Long-Term Care Options for Seniors

For too long, Indiana's long-term care policies have been tilted toward placing seniors in nursing homes rather than providing them with health care services at home. In 2003, I supported a new law (SB 493) that directed the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) to rework the state's Medicaid program so a range of services from home health care to nursing home care is made available to seniors without favoring one type of care over another. Services would fit the level of care an individual needs, ranging from some assistance at home to more intensive care at a nursing home.



To ensure the state continues making progress on revamping its long-term care system, I supported Senate Bill 449 that requires FSSA to report to the General Assembly's Health Finance Commission this summer about the implementation of last year's new law. The Commission will study how FSSA has been implementing the required changes.

I also supported House Bill 1251 that seeks to develop a safe system to avoid throwing away unused medications. The bill allows a pharmacy or pharmacist to donate medication to certain health clinics. It establishes a regional drug repository program to distribute donated drugs. HB 1251 also requires a health facility to return certain unused medication to the pharmacy that dispensed the medication. A pharmacy or pharmacist would be allowed to accept returned medication from a hospice program. The office of Medicaid policy and planning would review the process of returning unused medication.

The bill requires the Prescription Drug Advisory Committee to make recommendations about changes to benefits under Indiana's prescription drug program so it fits with the new prescription drug benefit under Medicare.



Stay in touch with Representative Matt Pierce

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